

PEACE AND ORDER

RECOMMENDED TO

SOCIETY,

IN AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION

OF JEDBURGH,

FROM JEREMIAH XXIX. 7.

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JEREMIAH XXIX. 7.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

PART of the people of Judah were yet in their native country, and part in the province of Babylon. False prophets arose among them, both at home and abroad. At home, the emblematical yoke, which the Lord commanded Jeremiah to put upon his neck,

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neck, was presumptuously broken by Haniah, who, in the spirit of falsehood, affirmed, that, within two years, the captives would be released. Abroad, Ahab and Zedekiah raised false hopes among the captives, and, by their lying divinations, provoked the court of Babylon to such a degree, that they were seized, and, by order of Nebuchadnezzar, roasted alive.

Against the false prophets at home, Jeremiah stood like an iron pillar, and a brazen wall; and, in a letter to the captives, warned them against the lying divinations of the deceivers abroad. The passage of his letter, which is our text, enjoins them to seek the peace and welfare of the city and province where they were captives, and to pray unto the Lord for it, assuring them that in its peace they should enjoy peace. This passage, though its primary relation is to the duty and interests of the captives in Babylon, offers to our consideration, who are
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free men in Britain, a theme of instruction, to which it is our duty and interest to give heed. It is the will of God that we should live peaceably and orderly in countries where we sojourn and receive protection. In illustrating this theme, I will describe the duty, which is living peaceably and orderly ; shew it to be the will of God ; mention some of its advantages ; and add an exhortation in several particulars.

According to this plan, the duty which is living peaceably and orderly is to be described. Seeking peace, praying unto the Lord for peace, and separating ourselves from haters and disturbers of peace, are parts of the duty which may be illustrated distinctly. It is our duty, to seek the peace and welfare of the country in which we are fed and protected. To seek peace, is to lead a quiet and godly life in the several places where our habitations are settled. In order to provoke ourselves and one another

ther to this, let us consider that the administration of grace is the dispensation of peace ; that the Father of glory, whom we call our God, is the God of peace ; that Jesus Christ, whom we believe to be our Saviour, is the Prince of peace ; that the Holy Ghost, whom we acknowledge to be our Comforter, is the spirit of peace ; that the new covenant, which we hold to be our charter, is an establishment of peace ; that the benefits of it, which are our heritage, are principles of peace ; that the gospel which exhibits these benefits is a message of peace ; and that, according to the ministry of reconciliation, one great object of redemption by the blood of Christ, is to slay enmity, extinguish strife, and unite nations in bonds of truth, and love, and peace, and friendship.—These are high and spiritual considerations, and will, we hope, operate strongly on well-disposed minds.

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Another part of the duty, is prayer for peace. The welfare of the country where we live is a blessing which the God of the whole earth promises and bestows. To him prayer for it, in the name of Christ, ought to be addressed. It is one of these good things concerning which he says, 'I will be inquired of to do it for you.' And I would have you to observe, particularly, that behaviour should always correspond to prayer. In praying for the peace of the country, we bind ourselves to seek and preserve it, so far as it depends on our personal behaviour. To pray for it with evil devices in our hearts, or with seditious speeches on our tongues, or treasonable doings among our hands, would be a mocking of the God of truth, and peace, and love, before whose throne we offer up our desires.

Further, separating ourselves from haters and disturbers of peace, is an important
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part of the same duty. It was a cause of grief to the princely and loyal spirit of David, that his evil-disposed countrymen compelled him to dwell among haters of peace. To this kind of grief good men may be frequently subjected; but they ought never to associate themselves with factious and turbulent persons; nor give the sanction of their presence to the forming and planning of devices against the tranquility of the public. ‘O my soul, come not thou into their secret; into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!’ ‘Wherefore, beloved, keep yourselves at a distance from the tents of riot and sedition, and, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men.’ Give none occasion to the world, who observe you, to call you an ill-humoured and ill-principled sectary, disaffected to the welfare and prosperity of that country in which you are fed and protected.

In order that the duty which has been described may affect conscience, I will shew it to be the will of God. When an apostle is enjoining subjection and obedience to rulers, he says, ‘ *So is the will of God.*’ And that a peaceable and orderly life is his will, appears—from his working. The peace which we enjoy in our country is the work of the God of peace, or a blessing that he creates and bestows. By his kind and efficient providence we are turned into peace, and peace is created and preserved in our borders. From his work we justly infer his will. After the counsel of his will the God of peace worketh all things. Since peace accords with the counsel of his secret, and the dictates of his revealed will, haters and troublers of it, setting themselves in opposition to him, ought to consider who ever did so and prospered!—From his promises. The promises of peace are numerous. Repetitions of these gracious assurances are condescensions to our infirmities,

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and helps to our faith and joy in the promises. My people, saith he, shall dwell in peaceable habitations, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, when it shall be hail coming down upon the forest. As we have heard from the words of his mouth, so have we seen in the dispensations of his hand. While war, like a storm of hail, mingled with blood, and fire, and vapours of smoke, is overthrowing the dwellings of some, and riot, like the shock of an earthquake, is filling the habitations of others with tumult and confusion, the goodness of God, under the mild and equitable reign of a kind Sovereign, is keeping ours safe and quiet resting places.—From his precepts. Peace and order in society, to which Christians are led by principle and inclination, God makes their duty, and binds them to it by precepts. Depart from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,

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are divine precepts that should be respected and observed by all who love and fear his name. Should any, professing to love and fear the great and dreadful name of the Lord our God, assemble themselves with Achans and troublers of society, they would violate his precepts, cause their profession to be suspected of evil tendencies; and endanger the safety of their own heads. ‘Curse
 ‘ not the King, no not in thy thought, and
 ‘ curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber;
 ‘ for a bird of the air shall carry the voice,
 ‘ and that which hath wings shall tell the
 ‘ matter *.’—From his covenant, which is an establishment of peace. When this covenant was established in his counsel, righteousness and peace embraced each other. When his beloved Son was brought into the world to fulfil it, a celestial band sang over the fields of Bethlehem, ‘Peace on earth,
 ‘ and good will toward men.’ When he gave his life a ransom for many, according

* Eccl. x. 20.

ing to its tenour, peace was made by the blood of his cross. When he revealed it to the heathen, peace was preached to them that were far off, and to them that were nigh. And, when he persuades and enables sinners to take hold of it, they enter into peace, and delight themselves in the abundance of that peace which passeth all understanding.

After shewing a peaceable and quiet life in society to be according to the will of God, a few of its excellent advantages may be mentioned. In his letter to the captives, Jeremiah reduces these into a promise of peace: ‘ In the peace thereof shall ye ‘ have peace.’ This promise was to them, and is to us, in doing the will of God, an assurance of the continuance of our peace with God; of the reign of peace in our own consciences; of the possession of peace among ourselves; and of all those advantages which are found in the friendship of society,

society, and the favour of civil superiors.—
 An assurance of the continuation of our peace with God. Peace with God, through Jesus Christ our mediator and advocate, is a possession of immense value. With it, all that is precious in the mines of the earth, and the channels of the sea, is unworthy to be compared. The man who possesses this jewel is rich, and, which many of the rich are not, happy ; since he carries into every city or province an heaven in his bosom, or that peace which passeth all understanding. Amidst a multitude of tribulations that compassed him on every side, Paul was happy and chearful, knowing that it would never be taken from him. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and not only so, but we also joy in him through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement *. An assurance of the reign of peace in our own consciences. Within the breast

* Rom. v. i. ii.

breast of a Christian, whose conscience is at rest in the blood of Jesus, there is a calm, while the tempest roars furiously without. Whatever calamity falls upon houses built on sand, his, founded on a rock, is a peaceable habitation, a sure dwelling, and a quiet resting place. If the four winds, as in the vision of Daniel, strive on the great sea, and the billows, rolling mountains high, beat the shores with violence and fury, he sits in his parlour, and, like a prince, reigns emperor over himself, and enjoys peace of conscience in the most terrific uproar among the kingdoms of this world.—An assurance of the possession of peace among ourselves. Good men, though they should never go out of their native country, nor move a mile from the place of their birth, are strangers and pilgrims, looking for a city, and seeking a country. In their unsettled situation, peace among themselves is of high importance. Their leader and commander enjoins it with authority : ‘ Have
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‘ peace one with another.’ Their surety and testator disposes it by testament. ‘ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth give I unto you : Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’—Again, An assurance of all those advantages which are found in the friendship of society, and the favour of civil superiors. The good will of society is a pleasure, which ingenuous and upright men enjoy with satisfaction, and improve to their spiritual advantage. To purchase it at the expence of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, is mean and wicked ; but, when it may be acquired without paying such prices, an honest mind will enjoy in it a refined pleasure, and turn it to many advantages. Of what advantage was the friendship of Ashpenaz to Daniel in Babylon ? With that prince God brought him into favour and tender love. The generous courtier, knowing the illustrious captive stood well affected

to the peace of the realm, carried it with the greatest politeness and condescension; while, on the other hand, the captive, like an Israelite in whom is no guile, turned the interest he had in the affections of his patron to the advantage of his own principles and conscience *. A quiet and peaceable life, spent in goodness and honesty, is both good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, and an expedient that he approves, of recommending ourselves to the esteem and favour of civil superiors.

Wherefore, on both these considerations, I demand attention to an exhortation in several particulars.

1. In prayer for the peace and welfare of the country, offer thanksgiving to the Father of mercies, that, like the captives, you are not in a strange land, and in servitude to a nation whose language you do not understand.

* Daniel i. 8.—14.

understand. Your harps are not, as their's were, hung upon the willows, nor are the songs of your temples turned into howlings. Under a wise and lenient administration, which abhors persecution, disclaims oppression, maintains liberty, protects property, executes judgment between man and man, and opens its ear to petitions and grievances, you sit at your own fire-side, dwell among your own friends, do your own business, eat the fruit of your own labour, and without molestation, serve the Lord according to his word. For these blessings, which are valuable and weighty in the scale of outward and national felicity; thanksgivings should be offered with our prayers to God continually. Therefore I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For

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this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour *.

2. Use not the liberty, which the law gives and protects, as an occasion to the flesh, a cloak of maliciousness, or a cover to base and illicit devices ; but use it as the servants of God who are called to liberty. Liberty, defined and measured by good laws, is the only freedom that is a blessing to nations. Licentiousness sometimes assumes to itself this venerable name ; but where it prevails, confusion and every evil work reign. Subjection and obedience to good laws, is true liberty. The sons of freedom are not a lawless and disobedient race, who boast themselves in doing every one that which seemeth right in his own eyes ; but children, who are the disciples of the law, and who glory in their being trained under the tuition and inspection of this wise

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3.

wife and benevolent guardian. Wherefore I exhort again, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness; but as the servants of God *.

3. Reckon not oppressive, the tribute-money, which the wisdom of the law imposes, and proportions to the exigencies and dignity of the state. Rulers are ministers of God, who ought to be supported in their ministry, by the people over whom he sets them for good. For this cause, pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending

* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15, 16.

tending continually upon this very thing*. To call the revenue, which the law imposes and exacts, an oppression, and to justify, from it, attempts to trouble the peace and order of society, would lay our inward part open to imputations of greediness, a principle of enterprise which, though predominant in the world, is beneath the high and princely spirit of believers, who, according to their profession, are crucified to the world, and the world to them by the cross of Christ. The honour of giving reward to the deserving, and bounty to the needy, is a jewel, which men of understanding and wisdom, do not wish to be obscured, nor torn from an imperial crown by the sparing hand of a national parsimony. Wherefore I exhort farther; render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour †.

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* Rom. xiii. 6.

† Rom. xiii. 7.

Render unto Cesar the things which be Cesar's, and unto God the things which be God's*.

4. Meddle not with them who are given to change. Should any imagine that this is an exhortation of my own devising, they would be mistaken. The ministry, which is committed to men, doth not invent and devise exhortations; but explain and recommend those which the wisdom of God hath dictated. My son, saith the wisdom of God by Solomon, fear thou the Lord and the King; and meddle not with them that are given to change. By them ~~that~~ are given to change, we understand men of unsettled and confused heads respecting civil authority, who call reformation every thing in opposition to good and established order, and who, not content to walk in the beaten path of **subjection** to rulers, fly off and amuse and trouble communities with visionary

* Luke xx. 25.

ary and lofty theories of innovation. Meddling with them, the evil into which the simple and unwary may be seduced, and against which all need to be warned, is counseling, advising, approving, commending them, and any way furthering their fanciful and daring speculations. Wherefore suffer yourselves to be reminded, that subjection to civil authority, commanding things just and equal, is a principle, which the secession, in its infancy, received and defended ; and, after it has grown into years, we wish seceders to hold fast to the end this same principle ; and to reject the fanatical and levelling theories of presumptuous and foolish men. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness to all men *.

5. Observe

* Tit. iii. 1, 2.

5. Observe the works of the Lord in the shaking of the nations. Commotions among the nations, which, in the bold and figurative style of prophecy, are earthquakes, may be expected before establishments of error and iniquity be melted down and dissolved. At their fall, the earth is represented reeling, the sea roaring, the islands moving out of their places, and the stars falling from heaven. But should we see armies routed, and nations tossed like a rolling thing before the whirlwind; should we see thrones cast down, and thrones profaned; should we see the loins of kings loosed, and kingdoms broken as foam upon the water; should we see the heart of princes moving as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, and terror and confusion sitting on every threshold, let us observe and declare the works of the Lord, and wisely consider of his doing. Men of wisdom who should see the name and glory of the Lord in his dispensations, will consider, and go to the oracle,
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the sanctuary, and the throne, many days, before they allow themselves to wish, that the enterprises of a nation in profaning a crown devoted to the papacy, and breaking down a throne that was a pillar of the see of Rome, were attempted by a protestant nation, under a protestant government, upholding the profession of protestant principles. The wine of the wrath of fornication, drunk with the blood of saints, throws at length communities, which have intoxicated themselves with it, into madness and fury. And, from prophecy, it appears to be the justice and policy of heaven, to employ in the execution of the forcerefs nations, who have drunk with her, and by their madness and violence to make her desolate and naked, to eat her flesh, and burn her with fire*. But, is a vindictive dispensation in one of the streets of that great city, which, for almost twelve hundred and sixty years, has assumed the supremacy of the King of Kings,

* Rev. xvii. 16.

Kings, a copy after which we ought to write, or an example that we should endeavour to follow ; or a precedent of enterprize that we should attempt to introduce among ourselves? Rather as if seven thunders were uttering their voices ; is not every mountain and hill reverberating in protestant ears : Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame *.

I speak not to your shame, neither do I stand in doubt of you. But I exhort you to withstand the good words and fair speeches of revilers of dignities, and despisers of dominion. Though I might be bold in the ministry to enjoin it for love's sake, I rather beseech you to hold fast unto the end the faith of protestants, and the testimony of seceders ; to keep no fellowship with the sons of uproar, and lovers of violence ; to

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* Rev. xvi. 15.

submit yourselves to civil authority in the fear of God ; to leave political investigation and discussion to politicians ; to lead a peaceable and quiet life in all godliness and honesty, and with well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish and unreasonable men, who, because they see you with a testimony against evil-doings in the church, hastily suspect you of evil devices against the welfare and authority of the state.

Finally, join yourselves to the Prince of Peace, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and who, with the reins of the universe in his hand, sitteth in the throne of judging right. Rest on him as your salvation, and follow him in obedience as your example. In faith and obedience ye shall have peace. Study to be quiet ; quiet in your own houses, and quiet in houses which employ you in their service. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Do
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your own business, work with your own hands. Plow, sow, reap, gather into barns. Buy, sell, make money, and all of the world that can honestly be made. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Lay up treasure in heaven. Set your affections on things above. Be wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. Amen.

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your own business, work with your own
hands. These, I say, are the things
that will make you rich, and all of the world
that can honestly be made. The Lord will
the kingdom of God, and his righteousness
shall be your reward. For you shall
not be on things above. He who is not
in the world, and his kingdom shall
be the Lord of the world.



